THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The contingent liabilities of 17 major States as on 31st March, 2002 is Rs. 166,116 crores constituting 7.2% of GDP.

(d) To enable fiscal consolidation, Government of India have enjoined States to draw up Medium Term Fiscal Reforms Programmes (MTFRP) which projected to bring down the consolidated debt of States. The build-up of debt and issuance of guarantees in future has been strictly capped by the MTFRPs and require specific permission of Government of India under Article 293(3) of the Constitution.

The Reserve Bank of India has also issued instructions to Banks and Financial Institutions to limit exposure to State Guaranteed loans within prudential norms. Banks and Financial Institutions are expected to apply due diligence, appraise the credit worthiness of the borrowings entities.

High stamp duty for registration of property

2704. SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ: Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for keeping Stamp Duty for the registration of the property *i.e.* flats, apartments, plots so high;

(b) the reasons for the registration rates varying from State to State; and

(c) the steps Government propose to take against those who do not get their property registered?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) to (c) Stamp duty for the registration of the property *i.e.* flats, apartments, plots falls within the purview of instrument *viz.* "conveyance". This is a State instrument and therefore, any increase or decrease of rates thereon is within the legislative competence of the State Government *vide* Entry 63 of

the State List (List-II). Since, it is a State subject, States are expected to take action against those who do not get their property registered.

Universal service obligation levy from Telecom Operators

2705. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are collecting "Universal Service Obligation" levy from all Telecom operators for funding the expansion of Telecom in rural areas which are not so remunerative;

(b) if so, whether this levy is accruing to the Consolidated Fund of India; and

(c) if so, the details of this amount collected so far and the manner in which this fund is going to be deployed and utilized and other details arising thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has recommended apportionment of the universal service levy @ 5% of the Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR). This levy is a part of the total licence fee, to be paid by the various service providers, such as Basic, Cellular, National and International Long Distance, Paging, Infrastructure Provider Category-II, Very Small Aperture Terminals (VSAT), etc. The Universal Service Support Policy, on the recommendations of the TRAI, as accepted by the Government, has taken effect from 1.4.2002. Guidelines in this regard have also been issued.

(b) The amounts set aside as Universal Service Levy till February, 2003 have been credited to the Consolidated Fund of India.

(c) An amount of Rs. 1273.73 crore set aside towards Universal Service Fund (USF) till 28th February, 2003 has been credited to the Consolidated fund of India. The guidelines referred to in reply to part (a) of the question govern the deployment and utilisation of the USF. The budgetary provision of Rs. 300 crore allocated for 2002-03 has